

Ameritrust timeline

A Plain Dealer review of Cuyahoga County contracts and federal court documents shows that at the same time a prominent lawyer and well-known construction firm played roles in the county's controversial purchase of the Ameritrust complex, they were also orchestrating bribes of county workers in exchange for lucrative public contracts, according to federal plea agreements.

Anthony O. Calabrese III and R.P. Carbone Co. have not been charged with any crime or identified by name, but descriptions in federal plea agreements match them. Both did work for the Staubach Co., which recommended that the county purchase the Ameritrust complex.

Events surrounding the purchase of the Ameritrust complex

October 2004: Cuyahoga County Commissioners approved hiring The Staubach Co. for \$385,000 to analyze properties and recommend a site for a new county administration building. Staubach's team included R.P. Carbone Co. to handle cost estimates and renovation evaluations. It hired Cleveland law firm Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease to negotiate its contract with Cuyahoga County. Attorney Anthony Calabrese was a primary contact for Staubach.

November 2004: Staubach's initial analysis ranked the Ameritrust complex fourth out of eight proposals.

March 2005: Staubach recommended the county buy the Ameritrust complex, calling it a "cost effective solution, prominent-business-first address."

August 2005: Cuyahoga County terminated its consulting contract with Staubach.

September 2005: Cuyahoga County paid Staubach \$2.6 million. Commissioners vote to buy the Ameritrust complex for \$21.8 million.

October 2006: County Commissioners voted to pay Carbone and another company \$10 million to oversee the conversion of the Ameritrust complex into the new county headquarters.

October 2007: County scrapped the plan to renovate the Ameritrust complex and instead put the buildings up for sale.

May 2008: The county canceled Carbone's contract at Ameritrust after paying a Carbone-led team of contractors about \$1.4 million.

July 2008: Federal agents raided the County Administration Building, as well as the homes and offices of Dimora, Russo and Kelley. Agents searched for documents reflecting Dimora's analysis or actions on the Ameritrust project, among others.

October 2004: Anthony Calabrese, working as a lawyer for halfway house Alternatives Agency, hired county employee J. Kevin Kelley to work as a consultant for the agency. Calabrese hid the hiring of Kelley from agency's board. Kelley was paid nearly \$200,000 over five years but did no real work for Alternatives Agency.

Early 2005: Calabrese lobbied county employee and Parma School Board member J. Kevin Kelley to award a construction contract to Carbone.

August 2005: Parma schools awarded Carbone a \$1.8 million contract to supervise renovation of Byers Field's grandstand, gym ceilings at Normandy High School and locker rooms at Parma High School. Calabrese and Kelley arrange for Carbone to pay \$15,000 to The Eagle Group, company owned by Kelley's friend Daniel Gallagher. Most of the money was given to Kelley as a kickback for steering the contract to Carbone.

End of 2005: Kelley helped Calabrese's law firm get a consulting contract, in which Calabrese promised a business he could help the company navigate Cleveland and Cuyahoga County politics. In return, Calabrese arranged for his law firm to pay \$1,500 a month to The Eagle Group.

December 2007: Calabrese and Brian Schuman, head of Alternatives Agency, ask Kelley to help restore county funding for the halfway house, which was set to be reduced. Kelley later tells Calabrese he has good news about Alternatives' funding.

January 2008: Calabrese tells Schuman to increase Kelley's monthly consulting fee as a way to pay for a trip to Las Vegas for County Commissioner Jimmy Dimora and Auditor Frank Russo.

Events alleged in the federal court documents